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# Bryan terminates Attorney General Denise George

By SUZANNE CARLSON Daily News Staff  
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Denise George



Cecile de Jongh

Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. has fired V.I. Attorney General Denise George, and appointed Carol Thomas-Jacobs to the role in an acting capacity, Government House Communications Director Richard Motta Jr. said Sunday.

Motta did not respond to a request for comment about Bryan's reasons for the decision, which comes days after The Daily News reported that George filed a lawsuit in federal court in Manhattan, accusing JPMorgan Chase of helping Jeffrey Epstein exploit women and girls.

Bryan, in a brief statement released late Sunday night, also gave no reason for George's termination.

An advertisement for GM USVI GlobalMedevac. The top half features a white medical evacuation aircraft with red crosses on the tail and fuselage, flying over a green landscape. The text "GM USVI GlobalMedevac" is in the top right, with "Emergency Air and Ground Ambulance Transportation" below it. A red banner across the middle contains the text "In A Medical Emergency, YOU CAN COUNT ON US!". Below this, two bullet points are listed: "• More Benefits at a Lower Cost" and "• You're more than a Patient...You're Family". At the bottom left, the contact information for Brent Mays is provided: "(340) 773-7374" and "annalyinsurance.com". On the bottom right, there is a button that says "Get A Quote" with a right-pointing arrow.

“I relieved Denise George of her duties as attorney general this weekend. I thank her for her service to the people of the Territory during the past four years as Attorney General and wish her the best in her future endeavors. Assistant Attorney General Carol Thomas-Jacobs will serve as Acting Attorney General,” the governor said in the prepared statement with the customary paragraph touting transparency.

Following that statement, Motta could not immediately be reached for comment on reports circulating that the governor was unaware of George’s lawsuit against JPMorgan Chase and was displeased with her previous court actions against the Epstein estate.

George and Justice Department spokeswoman Sandra Goomansingh did not respond to requests for comment from The Daily News.

Bryan appointed George as attorney general after he took office in 2019, and since January 2020, George has spent considerable time and Justice Department resources pursuing another civil suit against Epstein’s estate, which claimed his attorneys and associates fraudulently obtained tax benefits from the V.I. government through the Economic Development Authority.

That lawsuit, which is cited and attached as an exhibit to the JP Morgan claim, was recently settled for \$105 million, plus half the proceeds of the sale of Little St. James island, which is listed for \$55 million. The estate and its co-executors, Darren Indyke and Richard Kahn, denied all allegations of wrongdoing.

Since he purchased Little St. James in 1998, Epstein and his companies made numerous charitable contributions to schools and organizations throughout the territory, and had connections to officials in various roles.

Former first lady Cecile de Jongh served as office manager at Epstein’s St. Thomas-based Southern Trust Company for 20 years. Bryan was serving as chairman of the Economic Development Commission at the time under deJongh’s husband, former Gov. John deJongh Jr., and signed off on the most recent certificate for Southern Trust in 2014, granting Epstein a 90% exemption from V.I. income taxes and a 100% exemption from gross receipts and excise taxes.

First Lady Yolanda Bryan is currently employed by the EDA and was hired to the \$75,000-a-year role of “Business Ambassador” in 2019, a position that was created after her husband’s election as governor.

Prior to Stacey Plaskett’s election as V.I. delegate to Congress in 2015, she served as EDA general counsel from 2007 to 2012.

During that time, Epstein was convicted of child sex crimes in Florida, served an 18-month sentence in that state, and registered as a sex offender — all while receiving tax exemptions from the V.I. government.

The V.I. Justice Department is responsible for monitoring sex offenders like Epstein, but apparently failed to uncover or investigate reports that he was bringing victims to the territory for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

### Pursuing Epstein

George didn’t pursue any legal action related to Epstein until after he died by suicide in a Manhattan jail cell in August 2019 while awaiting trial on new sexual abuse charges.

A month before his death, George told The Daily News there was no reason for her to investigate Epstein — despite at least one victim’s public claims that Epstein had transported her to Little St. James and abused her.

George said at the time that an investigation can only be launched if someone files a criminal complaint or a peace officer observes suspicious activity, and “an investigation is not triggered because criminal activity was occurring in another jurisdiction, or another state.”

While at least one victim said in a civil lawsuit in New York that she was sexually abused at Epstein’s home on Little St. James, George said that information was not sufficient to launch a local investigation.

“It’s not based on that type of hearsay, or news reports from another jurisdiction,” George said at the time.



If the individual in the case filed a complaint “then an investigation can be opened,” she added.

George filed the civil lawsuit against Epstein’s estate about five months after his death and cited her desire to help victims who were harmed in the Virgin Islands.

Following the financial settlement, George said in a press release that she had met personally with three of Epstein’s victims, who described the abuse they suffered on Little St. James.

“We owe it to those who were so profoundly hurt to make changes that will help avoid the next set of victims. Through this settlement, and with their help, we will turn millions of dollars towards education, victim advocacy and support, and law enforcement,” George said in the statement.



## EDC benefits

Epstein received over \$144 million in tax exemptions from the V.I. government since 2013, according to the complaint filed by George in 2020, which was later changed to \$80 million in a subsequent amended complaint.

Epstein first began receiving tax benefits from the Virgin Islands government in 1999, after the Industrial Development Commission approved his company, Financial Trust Co., as a beneficiary, granting him a 90% exemption on income tax and 100% exemption on excise and other taxes.

George's lawsuit claimed Epstein and his associates presented false information to the Virgin Islands government in order to obtain tax incentives to fund his criminal activities, and Southern Trust Company "failed to disclose it did not and could not carry out its stated purpose of providing consulting services in financial and biomedical informatics."

EDA CEO Wayne Biggs Jr. told The Daily News in February 2020 that Epstein complied with the terms of his agreement, and an applicant's criminal history does not disqualify them from obtaining tax benefits from the government.

"We understand he was a sex offender, but his application was not involved in any type of business that was related to that area, his business was more the financial markets," Biggs said at the time.

While the V.I. government granted Epstein tax benefits for 20 years, George's new lawsuit claims JPMorgan Chase should have been aware of his criminal activities and reported them to law enforcement.

The lawsuit against JP Morgan, which is heavily redacted, cites a \$150 million penalty the New York State Department of Financial Services assessed Deutsche Bank for failing to monitor Epstein's accounts and "to scrutinize the activity in the accounts for the kinds of activity that were obviously implicated by Mr. Epstein's past."

Thomas-Jacobs, now acting attorney general, is currently assigned as an attorney on that case, according to court records.

Bryan on AG autonomy

George earned \$129,000 annually as attorney general, according to the Division of Personnel's employee database. Thomas-Jacobs has been earning \$127,000 a year as chief deputy attorney general.

When he first appointed George in 2019, Bryan said he had determined the Attorney General's Office required more autonomy.

“In the Virgin Islands, due to the inherent structure of our government, the balance of power is sometimes tipped towards the executive branch. Over the years, this bias has allowed individuals to use the power of the executive branch to intimidate, suppress and to exact political retribution on individuals and on other branches of government. It has also made way to grant favors for politicians and family affiliations, while persecuting perceived enemies and political opponents,” Bryan said at the time.

Independence for the attorney general, “would help to restore the balance of power to the executive branch. My team and I have given considerable thought to how we could help to ensure that this office, the Office of the Governor, is never used in this way, and every Virgin Islander is afforded the protection of the United States Constitution and the Organic Act,” Bryan added.

George’s daughter, Kmisha-Victoria Counts, received a \$70,000 sales contract from the V.I. Tourism Department that began on June 1, 2020. The contract tasked her with promoting the territory on the mainland, and Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte exercised a one-year renewal option for the contract in May 2021.

George said her daughter’s contract was not a conflict of interest.

“The contract is a standard government tourism remote sales contract that is lawful and ethical in every regard. The contract is with Tourism and was negotiated with Tourism, not the DOJ,” George said in a statement at the time. “I did not have any involvement or discussions at all in the negotiations of the contract with Tourism, as my daughter is an adult who manages her own business affairs.

During her tenure, George oversaw the 2019 prosecution of three former Schneider Hospital executives, whose convictions were later overturned by the V.I. Supreme Court after the justices found flaws in the government’s case.

George also held a press conference in July 2020 regarding 22-month-old Tamir Lake, who died on May 5, 2020 while in the custody of the Department of Human Services.

George announced that Lake’s death was due to blunt force trauma that had occurred in December of 2018, before he was taken into government custody.



Attorneys for the child's mother disputed the autopsy findings, noting the 19 months Lake had been in government custody.

George said V.I. Police would conduct a homicide investigation, but it's unclear what, if anything, ever came from that effort.

To date, no one has been arrested and charged with a crime in connection with Lake's death.



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